

Continuing Professional Development of College Teachers in Higher Education

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Abstract

Three hundred and thirty-five teachers working in three state-affiliated universities for the past 10 years were randomly selected for the study. Two self-reporting measures — Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and change in learning — were employed for data collection. Factor analysis yielded four dimensions of CPD — internal, external, research and collaborative. Besides, the CPD had two facets — belief and practice. The analysis also highlighted that teachers had less collaborative orientation and more internal orientation. Ideally, teachers had strong beliefs in CPD. But in practice, they did not show it. Professional learning practices did not alter belief values but had brought a change in teaching practices.

In the domain of higher education, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of college teachers has been much discussed but a less understood phenomenon (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Bolitho and Padwad, 2013; Singh, 2014a). It is a debatable issue whether college teachers in India continuously update their professional knowledge for both inclusive teaching and career development.

Inclusive teaching means empowering teachers, where learning gets precedence over teaching. A conceptual ambiguity between in-service training and CPD prevails in the minds of education planners. As a result, only officially sanctioned in-service training programmes and courses receive recognition and support, while other forms of CPD activities, such as attending seminars,

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acquiring add-on qualifications, publishing papers, etc., are not equally weighed. At the university level, there exists no provision of either pre-service or in-service training programme for teachers. College teachers perform CPD-related voluntary or mandatory activities for their career development. In both the cases, it is apparent that CPD is a planned, continuous and lifelong process, wherein teachers develop their professional knowledge, skills and practices (Padwad and Dixit, 2013).

Institutional support mechanisms for career development programmes help develop professional competence in teachers. This view not only excludes informal and voluntary contribution to teacher learning and teachers' desire to learn but also assumes authorities to be the sole provider of CPD, disregarding any possible role for teachers. Probably, under the impact of this view, teachers often seem not to think beyond career development or take responsibility for their own development after a certain period of time and rely solely on university administration for CPD. The conventional view of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge to students is gradually redundant. A teacher becomes a facilitator of learning rather than being a transmitter of knowledge. Teachers are now called upon not only to gain new professional knowledge and skills, but also to be inclusive and socially more responsible. CPD assumes even greater importance because it is the only way teachers

can equip themselves to cope with this change.

Professional Development Value (PDV) and behavioural practices are important components of CPD. PDV is a preferential importance and belief that a teacher has. Behavioural practices reflect adoption of such values in teacher learning. The lesser the discrepancy between professional values and their practices, the stronger will be the CPD of college teachers. In India, teachers usually show stronger beliefs in professional values but, in practice, they trail. Professionally, elite institutes, such as IITs, IIMs, etc., are capable of creating values and evolving CPD mechanisms for teachers. Even teachers by learning practices, themselves, strengthen their professional values (Singh, 2014). Teaching in university colleges, on the other hand, is not as esteemed as other professions, like medicine, engineering, or law (Umashankar and Dutta, 2007). This has resulted in a mindset of teachers not to go beyond classroom teaching and just carry out cosmetic researches for career development. A few studies (Opfer, Pedder and Lavicza, 2010), conducted in the West, lend support to the notion that belief in add-on professional development values facilitates the process of change in the learning of teachers. A growing body of literature focuses on the desire for professional learning practices and activities that lead to a change in teaching practices (Opfer, Pedder and Levicza, 2010). This is possible

when teachers place the importance of professional development values and show their willingness to add-on professional values. It is debatable whether professional development values lead to learning practices in teachers, followed by teaching practices. Professional Development Values brought to teaching and learning is not easily altered. Teachers reflect their learning practices corresponding to professional values. However, in many cases, they reorganise their Professional Development Values according to learning practices. Teachers perform various learning activities in order to improve their skills. Teacher learning change is more likely to occur when learning activities are completed. However, it is difficult to say that behavioural practices bring about a change in Professional Development Values unless the desire for learning is reinforced. Most elite learning institutes in India evolve some mechanisms to reinforce their teachers for learning. They create learning environments for both teachers and students (Singh 2014).

OBJECTIVES

1. To develop a measure of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for college teachers,
2. To estimate a gap in Professional Development Values and learning practices of CPD at college level,
3. To assess change in learning with respect to Professional Development Values and behavioural practices.

Since there is hardly any study on CPD of college teachers in the university system, no hypothesis was formulated. However, the study presumed that:

1. Continuing Professional Development is a multidimensional phenomenon consisting of teachers' orientation to learning and teaching.
2. Professional Development Values and their behavioural practices do not ideally correspond, and hence, show a gap in professional development.
3. Continuing Professional Development bears a significant relationship with change in teaching practices.

THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

Three hundred and thirty-five university teachers (80 professors, 185 associate professors and 70 senior lecturers) working in three State-affiliated universities from the eastern region of India were randomly selected (with replacement) for the study. Their experiences ranged from 10 to 30 years. Of them, 225 were male. The teachers represented 26 colleges and 14 PG departments, including three professional courses at the PG level and seven at the UG level.

INSTRUMENTS USED

Continuing Professional Development Scale: The CPD, comprising 13 items, was a multidimensional scale. It was a four-point scale measuring teachers' professional learning practices and their importance. The multiplication of two separate sets of scores was

used for factor analysis. The factor analysis by principal axis method was followed by oblique rotation, which yielded four interpretable factors accounting to 77 per cent of the total variances. The Eigen value was 1.78–3.37. The internal coefficient (Cronbach alpha) radiated between 0.57 and 0.71. The emerged factors were — internal orientation, external orientation, research orientation and collaborative orientation.

Professional Development Values and Learning Practices of CPD:

While measuring the CPD of teachers, two types of responses were gathered. The first response on each item of CPD focused on teachers' professional learning practices. The second response on the same item laid emphasised on their own values and beliefs, indicating how important a particular learning practice was for them. Two sets of scores

Table 1
Factor Analysis of Continuing Professional Development

Factor I: Internal Orientation

S. No.	Items	Loading
1.	I modify my teaching practices in the light of classroom evidences (3.42)	.78
2.	I experiment with my innovative teaching practices (3.38)	.74
3.	I consult pupils about how they learn most effectively (3.33)	.66
4.	I reflect on my practice as a way of identifying professional learning needs (3.37)	.61

Variance = (26.10), Eigen Value = (3.37), Cronbach Alpha = (.71)

Factor II: External Orientation

S. No.	Items	Loading
1.	I use the web as one of the sources of useful ideas for improving my teaching practice (3.07)	.69
2.	I draw on good teaching practices from other institutions as a means to further my own professional development (3.04)	.64
3.	I modify my teaching in the light of feedback received about classroom practice from other colleagues (3.34)	.60
4.	I reflect on my practice as a way of identifying professional learning needs (3.37)	.61

Variance = (20.54), Eigen Value = (2.97), Cronbach Alpha = (.66)

Factor III: Research Orientation

S. No.	Items	Loading
1.	I read research reports as one of the sources of useful ideas for improving my practice (2.57)	.68
2.	I relate what works in my own practice to research findings (2.50).	.65
3.	I modify my teaching practice in the light of published research evidence (2.56)	.62
4.	I reflect on my practice as a way of identifying professional learning needs (3.37)	.61

Variance = (16.12), Eigen Value = (2.25), Cronbach Alpha = (.62)

Factor IV: Collaborative Orientation

S. No.	Items	Loading
1.	I carry out joint research or evaluation with one or more colleagues as a way of improving my practice (2.72)	.64
2.	I engage in reflective discussion of working practices with one or more colleagues (3.31)	.61
3.	I engage in collaborative teaching and planning as a way of improving practice (3.18)	.59

Variance = (14.20), Eigen Value = (1.78), Cronbach Alpha = (.57)

Note: Value in parenthesis against each item denotes mean.

were separately analysed to assess the magnitude of teachers' professional learning practices and beliefs in a particular learning situation.

Teacher Learning Measure: A set of 13 questions was framed to assess the impact of beliefs and practices on change in learning. Each question was a situation, in which teachers had engaged themselves in learning activities. While reporting these changes, they were asked to consider those professional activities in which they had participated during the

last 12 months. It was a four-point scale. A period of 12 months was used to record changes in practice as teachers had a good recall ability for that given period.

Procedure: A number of activities were expected to be performed by a teacher for CPD. The present study covered a few significant activities that were relevant to teaching and research. For teaching-learning measures, some common situations were generated with a presumption that they would react to a situation as they had done in the past.

RESULTS

PDV and Learning Practices of CPD:

Continuing professional development had four dimensions — internal, external, research and collaboration. An attempt was made to ascertain whether teachers differed on Professional Development Values and learning practices on each dimension of CPD. On each dimension of CPD, professional values outstripped learning practices ($p < .01$). On internal orientation to learning, teachers had more professional values (mean 3.41) than learning practices (mean 2.35), showing a gap between professional values and learning practices (t-ratio 10.6, $p < .01$). The

difference between professional values and learning practice (t-ratio 5.63, $p < .01$). The difference for research orientation between values and practices was significant, confirming that teachers had the least orientation to research (mean 2.51), and hence, were found practising it less (mean 2.02). On collaborative orientation to learning, teachers had a high level of professional values but were found practising it less (t-ratio 12.63, $p < .01$). What they practised in their profession did not correspond to their professional values. The difference between beliefs and practices for collaborative orientation to learning was huge ($p < .01$). College teachers were

Table 2
Difference between Beliefs and Practices

Orientation	Beliefs		Practices		t-ratio
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Internal	3.41	1.25	2.35	1.41	10.6**
External	3.15	1.17	2.12	1.22	11.44**
Research	2.51	0.91	2.02	1.07	5.63**
Collaborative	3.07	1.16	2.06	0.87	12.63**

Note: ** significant at .01 level.

difference for internal orientation to learning was also significant, showing a gap between professional values (mean 3.41) and practices (mean 2.35). Similar trend was noted in case of external orientation (t-ratio 11.44, $p < .01$). Teachers also had high level of professional values ($m=3.15$) on external source of knowledge but were found practising it less. On research orientation, they had a moderate

reluctant to use support mechanisms of professional development but had placed importance to it.

Table 3 reflects multiple comparison among the dimensions of CPD separately on professional values and practices with a presumption that whether teachers differed on professional values and practice elements. The differences between practice elements and professional

value elements of CPD were, by and large, significant ($p < .01$). On each comparison between dimensions of CPD, teachers had high professional values than practices. The differences between internal and external professional values (t-ratio 2.6, $p < .01$) and between internal and external practices (t-ratio 2.3, $p < .05$) were significant, showing a consistent pattern. A similar trend was observed between internal and collaborative and between internal and research dimensions of CPD. The difference between external and collaborative was not found to be significant both on professional values and practices ($p > .05$). Contrary to it, they showed

high orientation to professional values on external and research dimensions of CPD (t-ratio 8.0, $p < .01$) but had low practices ($p > .05$) on the same. A similar pattern was observed in case of collaborative and research orientations to professional development.

An overall trend confirmed that teachers not only differed on professional values and learning practices but brought variation in preferential arrangement of CPD dimensions too. Some dimensions of CPD held more importance to them, while the rest had the least significance. Collaborative orientation followed by research orientation had the least

Table 3
Difference between Dimensions of CPD on Beliefs and Practices

Orientation	Difference between values and beliefs				t-ratio	Difference between practice				t-ratio
	M	SD	M	SD		M	SD	M	SD	
Internal and external	3.41	1.25	3.15	1.17	2.6**	2.35	1.41	2.12	1.22	2.3*
Internal and collaborative	3.41	1.25	3.07	1.16	4.25**	2.35	1.41	2.06	0.87	2.9**
Internal and research	3.41	1.25	2.51	0.91	11.25**	2.35	1.41	2.02	1.07	3.3**
External and collaborative	3.15	1.17	3.07	1.16	1.00	2.12	1.22	2.06	0.87	0.67
External and research	3.15	1.17	2.51	0.91	8.00**	2.12	1.22	2.02	1.07	1.11
Collaborative and research	3.07	1.16	2.51	0.91	7.00**	2.06	0.87	2.02	1.07	0.5

Note. * $< .05$; ** $< .01$.

Table 4
Change in Teaching Learning

Change	Mean	SD
PDV (overall)	2.16	1.89
i. About teaching	2.41	1.11
ii. About pupil learning	1.91	1.91
Practice (overall)	2,85	1.22
i. Improved knowledge skills	2.92	.87
ii. Used new study materials	2.71	.86

importance to them, and hence, were not reflective in their practices.

Change in Teaching-learning: While reporting on change, resulting from professional development practices, the teachers admitted that their professional learning activities brought more variation in teaching practices ($m=2.85$). However, professional development values (2.16) brought the least change in teaching-learning (Table 4). Institutional learning practices were more important to teachers who had brought change in teaching-learning. Hence, beliefs and values embedded in teaching were not sufficient to bring about a change in teaching practices, unless learning activities by teachers are ensured in the institutions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study witnessed Continuing Professional Development as a multidimensional phenomenon. But not all dimensions had equal valence in terms of preferential importance and its practices for change in teaching-learning. On each dimension of

Continuing Professional Development, teachers had high Professional Development Values than practices for teaching-learning. They showed high internal orientation, followed by external and research orientation for Continuing Professional Development. The study noticed a significant gap between Professional Development Values and practices on all dimensions of Continuing Professional Development. Ideally, they acknowledged the importance of Continuing Professional Development but did not practise it to the extent it was being expected. Teachers do learn, and then, engage themselves in professional competence. It is determined by the Indian mindset (Sinha, 2012). They organise their thoughts, feelings and actions in order to meet specific contextual demands. The Indian mindset is a paradoxical mixture of modern and traditional values, where tradition and technology go hand in hand. (Sinha, 2012, p.17). Not only people here hold inconsistent and contradictory beliefs, values, norms and practices, they also possess them without any discomfort

or dissonance. Multiple comparisons among dimensions of CPD separately on Professional Development Values and practices confirmed that teachers differed on professional values and practices for professional competence. Results showed that on each comparison of CPD, teachers showed a high desire for change in teaching-learning but low intensity of practices. Thus, another presumption got substantiated that belief in Professional Development Values and their practices do not ideally correspond. Teaching and research are seen as separate activities. While teaching is perceived as an institutional work, research is viewed as a personal agenda for moving forward in one's career. Colleges work like higher secondary schools. Teaching means periods taken by the teachers (Krishna Kumar, 2012).

Classroom teaching can be classified into two categories—subject-specific (content knowledge) and pedagogy-specific (teaching process). Internal orientation to learning is subject-specific knowledge, which is relevant to classroom teaching. On the other side, pedagogy-based knowledge requires improvement in the teaching process. Teachers give priority to subject-specific knowledge instead of pedagogy-based learning.

In the West, curriculum and pedagogy both follow the teacher's own research interests. "Teaching and research are the two sides of the same coin and the modern society cannot exist without a research society. Most of the research institutions had been overwhelmingly public institutions and they facilitate an environment for both competitive and collaborative research and studies" (*The Hindu*, 17 September 2012).

The lack of collaborative orientation restricts the university to become a learning institution (Singh, 2014). The study presumed that professional values embedded in teaching practices can be altered. Values, too, are learnt and cultivated by professionals by deliberate application of mind (*The Hindu*, 15 September 2012). Practising teaching and learning brings about a change in professional values. If a learning situation is created and learning is ensured for teachers, there may be a possibility of add-on professional values. Hence, continuing professional development is more than an exercise of capacity building. When teachers participated in various professional learning activities and spent more hours in the institutions, it had a greater impact on their performance (Singh, 2014a).

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